

Media, PA — Former three-star Admiral Joe Sestak, now serving his first term as Congressman in Pennsylvania's Seventh District, marked Memorial Day by launching a "recollection collection drive" for the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project.

Immediately after his election to the House of Representatives, Congressman Sestak met with the Library of Congress about the Veterans History Project. Created in 2000 by the United States Congress, the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress seeks to collect and archive the personal recollections of U.S. wartime veterans to honor their service and share their stories with current and future generations. The Project also collects stories from homefront civilians who worked in support of our armed forces.

"It is important that we work closely to record the thoughts and recollections of our veterans to ensure that future generations, particularly our students, have access to the memories and experiences of veterans acquired during their service to the nation," said Congressman Sestak. "These individual stories will provide historians with invaluable information to give context to some of the greatest moments in our history and some of the most tragic. Just as important, it will provide the public with a way to remember and celebrate the sacrifices made by the men and women who have fought to protect our freedom."

Area high school students will be a significant part of supporting this process by interviewing veterans over the coming months and years, learning the value of public service from the experiences of those who came before them. Beginning now, Congressman Sestak's office will record and document the veteran's recollections.

"Our greatest generation, the World War II veterans, is fewer in numbers with each passing day. But they are not the only veterans whose service to our country was instrumental in shaping the country and people we are today -- Korean War veterans, Vietnam War veterans, Persian Gulf War, and our more recent veterans Afghanistan and Iraq wars each have unique and valuable stories to share, as do all who have served at anytime in our military," stated Congressman Sestak.

Congressman Sestak was joined at the launch by his father, a World War II veteran who served 20 years as a captain in the Navy. Congressman Sestak grew up hearing his father's stories of the Battle of Leyte Gulf and the Surigao Straights, which motivated him to join the Navy.

“I am who I am because of my father,” said Congressman Sestak. “He inspired me to serve my country and I hope the involvement of high school students in this project will similarly teach them the importance of public service.”

Congressman Sestak also thanked George Strimel, a Korean War veteran of Wayne. Mr. Strimel at Radnor 21 Studios will train the high school students to interview and record the veterans.

Veterans who are interested in sharing their recollections should contact Congressman Sestak’s office at 610-892-8623.

Since he has been in Congress, Congressman Sestak has been fighting for the men and women who have served and who are currently serving in our armed forces. He successfully passed two amendments to H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act, which will improve mental health care for our wounded soldiers. The first amendment highlights the fact that mental health care is an essential component to the medical services offered to our Veterans and the members of our Armed Services by clarifying that ‘medical care’ as defined in H.R. 1538 includes mental health care services.

The second amendment requires the Secretary of the Department of Defense to develop a plan to help prevent Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other stress-related psychopathologies (including substance abuse conditions) from developing in our military service members. In addition, it requires the Secretary to submit to Congress within 180 days a plan for establishing a Peer-Reviewed research program within the Defense Health Program’s research and development function to research the prevention of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and how to best strengthen the psychological resiliency of our military service members. Both amendments passed with unanimous support.

Congressman Sestak also supported the Defense Authorization Bill, which provided funds for a number of important provisions for military personnel.

The Defense Authorization Bill:

- Prohibits increases in retiree and soldier health TRICARE and pharmacy user fees, which the Administration proposed to do in the midst of a war

- Authorizes a monthly payment of \$40 a month for surviving spouses who are denied the full amount of their Survivor Benefit Plan because of concurrently receiving Dependency and Indemnity Compensation.
- Allows returning service personnel to authorize the Defense Department to provide their medical and health information to the Veterans Affairs Department.
- Provides resources that take care of our service members and their families by authorizing a 3.5% across-the-board pay raise (.5% above the Administration's proposal) for all service members, which reduces the pay gap between the military and private sector to 3.4%.

Congressman Sestak also voted in the FY 2007 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Bill to provide \$1.8 billion for veterans' medical care. In addition, in the FY 2008 budget, he voted to strengthen our national defense and honor our promises to our brave troops and veterans by providing the largest increase for veterans' health care in the history of our country – \$3.6 billion more than the President's budget and more than \$30 billion above the President over five years. This will help to ensure that the 1,145,918 veterans in Pennsylvania receive care worthy of their sacrifice.

Congressman Sestak is a former three-star Admiral in the U.S. Navy and is the highest ranked officer ever elected to Congress.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "DeepBlue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.

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